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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: KOSOVO INDEPENDENCE AND TAIWAN

Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage February 22 on a U.S. Navy cruiser which launched a missile Wednesday and successfully destroyed a dying U.S. spy satellite carrying toxic fuel; on Taiwan's March presidential poll and the UN referenda; and on the island-wide celebrations of the lantern festival Thursday. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a column in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" compared Taiwan's bid to join the UN with Kosovo's recent declaration of independence. The article concluded that, unless Taiwan joins the UN, it will be difficult for the island to have a foothold in the international community. An editorial in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" also chimed in, saying that the United States' and other countries' willingness to recognize Kosovo in the face of fierce opposition from Russia and China "must be particularly galling for Taiwan's independence supporters." End summary.

A) "[Is Taiwan] Not Even as Good as Kosovo?"

The "Free Talks" column in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 720,000] wrote (2/22

"... Taiwan's qualifications for independence are much better than those of most UN member states. Kosovo has a population which is only one tenth of that of Taiwan's, and its national territory is only one third of Taiwan's. Even though it has yet to join the UN, Kosovo was immediately acknowledged by the United States and most EU nations once it declared independence. Sooner or later, it will become a UN member. Given Kosovo's case, it will be difficult for Taiwan to have a foothold in the international community unless it joins the UN. Although it may be a tough task for Taiwan to become a UN member, the move to cast a referendum ballot to show support for Taiwan's UN membership will be able to convey the Taiwan people's desire [to the international community]. Unless the Blue camp has some secretive agenda in mind, how difficult can it be for it to support Taiwan's UN referenda?"

B) "One Rule for Kosovo, One for Taiwan"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (2/21):

"... The fact that nations such as the US and the UK are willing to recognize Kosovo in the face of fierce opposition from Russia and China must be particularly galling for Taiwan's independence supporters, but apart from a few obvious parallels that can be drawn, the similarities between Kosovo and Taiwan end there. The main difference is that an overwhelming majority of the population in Kosovo -- the 90 percent who are ethnic Albanians -- support independence, while in Taiwan support for independence remains to the side of mainstream public opinion and is even divided among ethnic groups. ...

"Rice cited the ethnic cleansing and 'crimes against civilians' that

took part during the breakup of the former Yugoslavia as proof of Kosovo's unique status. The problem for Taiwan is that it experienced a form of ethnic cleansing -- the 228 Incident and White Terror ethnic discrimination -- at a time when such events were better hidden from the scrutiny of the world press. Add to that the geopolitical situation in the region, which meant that any support for a nascent independence movement was ignored. ... The problem is that UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon must now decide whether to hand complete control of Kosovo over to NATO, a decision that can only be made by the UN Security Council -- where China and Russia have veto powers. Until that decision is made, Kosovo remains in the hands of UN peacekeepers and at the mercy of China, meaning that in all likelihood Taiwan will end up empty-handed and independence-minded Taiwanese will once again have to sit on the sidelines jealously watching a newly formed nation celebrate its freedom."

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